Their Own Wedding

LOUISE S. HOTCHKISS

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Their Own Wedding.

By the same Author

LE PREMIER LIVRE
DE FRANÇAIS

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their hands upon that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand is.

MILTON

Their Own Wedding

BY

LOUISE S. HOTCHKISS

BOSTON, U.S.A.
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To

THE WHISPERING VOICES OF THE TREES,

AND THE

LOVING, WATCHFUL SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

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THEIR OWN WEDDING

CHAPTER I.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

It was in Karspule Strasse that Mildred Heath had found a *pension*. People spoke of it as Frau Pastorin Jerome's house; but the money of English and American students had built this modern dwelling, and the property belonged to her daughter, Fräulein Marietta Jerome. Numerous Oxford, Harvard, and Yale graduates had been taught by Fräulein to take their first step in the German language, and had been faithfully advanced till their final day in the Georg-Augustus-University.

There had accompanied Mildred to Göttingen a maiden aunt, who had been resurrected from the country and an idle forlorn life in an old homestead, fitted out by Mildred's father with some modern clothes, and was now to serve as a witness to society that the young lady was duly chaperoned. With other

Americans they had arrived the evening before. The other Americans had settled in the homes of other Frau Pastorins, and one of them, Arnor Thayer, thought himself a lucky fellow to be only five minutes' walk around the corner on Plesse Strasse.

Mildred had just rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and was looping the curtain a fold farther back to get a daylight-peep at the old German town, when that young man passed the house, on his way to the University. He lifted his hat as he sent a look up to the casement,— a look which well might have made a girl feel that she owned her share of this beautiful universe. His tender glance lingered a moment on the gold-brown hair which a hasty toilet had left insecure, and which the wind was tossing against the pane; then he strode manfully forward, with the air of one bent on some high purpose which heaven had quickened by

this moment's opportunity. The young girl stepped hastily back from the window, a warm glow creeping over her cheek, but almost immediately came forward again to watch the retreating form; and as she did so her eyes filled with that mellow intensity which rises from a deep, ardent nature in the spring-time of life.

It was a rich, warm autumn day which spread a shimmer of gold over the hills of this historic spot. Mildred pushed her casement still wider open, and greeted the old town, celebrated in America for its schools of language, literature, and science, about which Arnor and she had talked with the most profound traditional reverence, until both were ready to do homage to the very earth on which its foundations were built. Only the yard and a narrow street intervened between her window and the fortification wall which had served in the infancy of the town as its

defence, and now stood as a monument to a far-away period of antiquity. Its slopes were high and steep, and time had kindly covered them with green, ornamented its top with two parallel rows of aged linden-trees, and converted the whole into a grand elevated promenade. The wall was once a powerful arm which held the entire town in its embrace, but long years ago it had been broken through in places and crossed by busy streets; while in other places it was losing its solidity and bending over like a tired back,— too tired longer to protect humanity. In another direction her eye rested a moment upon two mediæval towers which rose from as many churches,— one forebodingly dark, bearing the air of guarding the secret of tragic events and bloody deeds centuries old, of which it was now the only living witness.

At this moment, Katharina, a pretty *Chocoladenmädchen*, in a white kerchief

and long pink apron, tripped into the room, bearing chocolate and rolls. She brought a message from Mildred's aunt, that she was too weary to rise; and another from Fräulein Jerome, that she begged Miss Heath to amuse herself until she had finished her regular morning lessons with students, when she would be at her service to complete plans for the study of German,— about which, be it known to the reader, negotiations had been opened in letters that had passed to and fro across the Atlantic.

Mildred smiled at the picture of her chaperone sleeping until noon. "Poor old aunty," she murmured, "she won't die without having seen Europe; so much for her coming. But she never has chaperoned anything but her cat; and I must get Katharina to look after her."

In the interval of stirring her chocolate and sipping it slowly, Mildred took

out her note-book and pencil and cast her eye about her sitting-room. She jotted down a line or two about the place having an American air, suggested by a carpet over the entire floor fastened down with tacks; a rocking-chair, a Magee stove, and blankets instead of a feather-bed to cover her at night. With half-a-dozen strokes she made a sketch of one corner of her bedroom.

"Horror! how it frightened me in the night! A sheet for a clothes-press! I dreamed it was the ghost of an old warrior, full gallop around this ancient fortification."

With another flourish of her pencil, a few curves, and a bit of shading, the ghost stood in bold relief on the margin. Then there followed jottings more in detail, to the effect that she had spoken German with Katharina, and understood her as well as she would have the same sort of ungrammatical talk in English.

The girl was a glib talker, and Mildred learned later that German servant girls are apt to be loquacious who wait on foreigners, and linger around their coffee-cups mornings. Katharina had told her that Karspule Strasse was a side street, mostly frequented by students who boarded with Frau Pastorins (ministers' widows), of whom there was a great number in Göttingen. The street did not furnish much outlook, and about all the travel that went through it was two processions; one went to the cemetery, and the other to the house of Professor Eicherhorn. The funeral procession occurred at any season of the year as stern fate decreed, and it made American girls who boarded with Fräulein Jerome so homesick that they hid their faces in the bed-clothes while it was passing.

Mildred ceased to stir her chocolate, and the curiosity she betrayed encouraged the girl, who started in with a

vivid description of the procession, and was proceeding at high speed when her listener interrupted her.

"How would you like a picture to go with your story? Let's imagine it is winter, and a dead man is on his journey to-day."

Without waiting for a reply, Mildred went to her trunk and took out a pad of sketching-paper and some crayons. "Now proceed," she said, arranging her material for drawing, "but not too fast."

Looking over the artist's shoulder the girl continued her narrative; then hesitated, and finally stopped short in open-mouthed wonder at the freaks and flourishes of the black and white crayons. The following is a broken outline of these freaks: Four horses draped in robes of inky black, covering the entire body and trailing in snowdrifts; sixteen strong legs floundering; fleecy stuff flying to the horses' shoulders; eight round holes edged with white,

and great rolling, liquid eyes staring through the holes.

Katharina shivered a little at this realism, but declared that it was more like it than the thing was like itself.

"You are the best judge," responded the young American, and worked on.

A low wagon like a platform; a casket on it; snow and wind playing with a black cloth, tossing up the corners and exposing to view what was its duty to cover and hide.

There was a pause, and the crayon rested while Katharina brought up her part of the story.

"No funeral ever takes place in Göttingen without a Todtenfrau. She wears heavy boots, and her eyes are fixed immovably on the ground. With long military strides she marches on after the dead. The government employs her thus to march on, and her absence at a funeral would be as unusual as that of the priest or pastor."

The Todtenfrau took her place in the solemn cortège drawn by the artist, and the paper was held up at arm's length for Katharina's final criticism.

"I never seen anything so like in my life," said the girl.

Mildred smiled and tossed the sketch one side. She was tired enough now to dream a little,—a habit she had of cutting realities short; but the girl begged to be allowed to tell her about the "Students' Procession," as it is termed, and Mildred indulged her, but prayed her to condense. What she gathered was in brief that this other procession lasts a month, and is made up of students from the Georg-Augusus-University. They wear their best clothes, if they have any,—white kids, swallow-tail coats, and stove-pipe hats. They are on their way to Profesor Eicherhorn's with a roll of parchrent under the right arm, to know their fate as to a degree. Their look is downcast

and anxious, as many an American girl can testify who has wickedly peeped through the curtain of Fräulein Jerome's window; but on returning, if success has crowned the examination, their heads are erect; they look up to the window, and the American girl claps her hands in congratulation. The gate flies open, and they rush for Fräulein Jerome's study, ring her bell, and make a low obeisance. This they may well do, for every thesis has passed through her hands, and to her their triumph is largely due. She has done this for so many years that she has become a thorough master of the art; and many an error in matter as well as in form of composition has been corrected before it reached Professor Eicherhorn; and perfect literary style is expected from students who have studied with Fräulein Jerome.

There was a ripple of fun, and the artist's eyes twinkled merrily as she

again bent over her pencil. Katharina had never seen Arnor Thayer; but the type of the anxious student was so well worked out,—the downcast look, and the parchment under the arm, not omitting the long dress-coat (slightly exaggerated),— that the servant girl clapped her hands and relieved her feelings in an outburst of laughter.

"You are the best judge, as I said of the Todtenfrau; now will you go and see to my aunt, and serve her faithfully?" said Mildred, and she slipped a coin into the girl's hand. The latter vanished with a light step.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOLDEN BRIDGE.

MILDRED listened for the step of her teacher on the stairs, but no one came. "She must be late in getting through her lessons," she thought, "and mine is to be the last." She fell to musing, and ended in some revolutionary thinking that startled her. Arnor Thayer had suffered no such delay, but was already matriculated as a student in the Georg-Augustus, and half through his first lecture. Then suddenly it flashed upon her that their educational privileges in Europe were not likely to be as fairly shared as in her own country. Her opportunities were to be inferior to his, accidental and unorganized. Her father would be disappointed.

"Alack! Alack!" she sighed, "'he that saveth his life shall lose it!' I do not like this kind of thinking; I will

give a few touches to the Todtenfrau, and make Katharina a present."

But the day was warm, and the chirp of the crickets was drowsy. She felt herself caught as if by an unseen hand, and a filmy veil of gold was very slowly drawn across her sight; and the hand pressed her brow until her head sank back into the pillow of her chair. It was so still outside she could hear a leaf now and then drop from the linden-trees and rustle into a niche in the wall. She heard her note-book creep down from her lap, dragging the pencil after it; and then followed the crayons and the picture of the Todtenfrau all falling in a heap together. Her hand lay quite still in her lap, powerless to arrest this disorder.

The breeze lifted her hair from her brow, and her misty eyes saw the old fortification reel. Its walls swam away and melted into the great ocean she had crossed; and out of the ocean there

rose a golden bridge which stretched leagues away, until the farther extremity rested on the stone steps of her city home. It was a strange perspective this backward stretch, so unlike the golden bridge down the future, which all her life she had seen building.

It was a wonderful experience, this intense concentration,— so intense that she was powerless to close the lids of her eyes, or move her gaze from this enchanted spot. Two characters stepped softly out of the molten atmosphere, about that door-way, and were framed in the open window before which she sat. Though so far away, both were so near that she stretched forth her hand in the vain endeavor to clasp the precious forms. One was that of her father. The other figure was a manly, heroic boy. He was coming round to her father's door to sell the morning papers. His cap was torn, but the hair beneath was dark and

abundant; the brow broad and handsome. It was the side-door where he rang, and the steps were high and partly hidden by a climbing vine. No honeysuckle was ever so sweet as that vine whose fragrance seemed to float in on the warm air.

Then followed a confusion of shifting scenes, which ran through the wide range of all her emotions. There were frequent chats under the honeysuckle with that newsboy, talks, study, books; a violent contention with the governess about him; indignant feet flying to her father's study (she laughed in her dream) to ask the question: "What is a social set, papa? Isn't a poor boy as good as a rich one? I like Arnor Thayer; he knows a great deal; he heard the cruel words of the governess; he understands French; he went away with a proud look; he will never come back again; oh! oh!"

The look of her parent and his an-

swer were written all across the old fortification. A white lily and a blue were in a vase on his table.

"See these flowers," he said. "One has color, the other has not; but they grow side by side in Nature's garden. If you have friends and wealth, Arnor is a boy of remarkable character. He did not get angry as my little daughter did, but went away with quiet, manly dignity. You have done right to lend him your books, and to teach him your French. You can say to your governess that we are all one in the sight of God, and that I give you permission to talk with your friend on the doorstep."

Then there followed the blending of a thousand incidents in Mildred's mental picture gallery which, as they passed, appealed to every period of her memory, to all her mind's and heart's experience through which she had lived; and for the first time in her brief career

she saw the fragments of her existence being collected into a page of history. The pages fluttered to and fro, giving her, it is true, only a glimpse here and there; but these glimpses hung like lamps on the walls of her memory.

By the power of his own will and the force of his own merit, Arnor Thayer had climbed the ladder of learning to an honorable degree in America's greatest university. Meantime she had fitted with private tutors to enter a college for women almost the equal of his own. They passed through this period of their youth with no mutual promise that they were ever to meet again. Though this was not her father's command, it was his loving request, and he was implicitly obeyed. Only at rare intervals did a note pass between them and then by the way of Mr. Heath's hand. The note was formal, but he must have divined that the lamp of love, lighted on the door-step beneath

the fragrance of the honeysuckle, was being faithfully trimmed, and the spark was growing to a steady flame.

To-day this lamp swung high above the fortification wall, a golden censer,—swinging, ever swinging, intoxicating Mildred's senses with its sweet incense. She lifted her arms, and struggled to embrace it and draw it down to her.

There stood out plainly on the page of her memory the commencement day, when Arnor's essay on the "Ethics of Jurisprudence" was reported in the papers as being so eloquent that wise old college veterans applauded. Her father was present and witnessed Arnor's triumph; but he remained silent as to any renewal of their previous personal intercourse, and more years rolled by, their souls communicating only by secret soul-methods; and love cut deep channels in their lives, and the sweet waters of bliss filled these channels to the brim.

What were these soul-methods? She had never sought to know. For the mind to question what the soul was certain of, was to her unreasonable and unrighteous. But in this Old World of science and philosophy there might be other opinions. She listened; but the chirp of the crickets and the falling leaves were the only sounds that broke the noon-day stillness.

And now the fluttering pages of her life's history stood still; and one chapter plainly visible was headed in letters that sparkled like diamonds, while its background was a placid sea of summer blue.

CHAPTER III.

FACE TO FACE IN THE FLESH.

It was Mildred's graduating day, and her father had invited Arnor Thayer to accompany him to the college, and to be his guest that evening at dinner.

Beneath the honeysuckle vine on the door-step, where they sat together many weeks after, Arnor confessed to her what were his emotions at that first meeting. How, as a spectator in the audience, he watched for her white gown to come upon the stage, and hardly dared to lift his eyes to her face; how he wondered if the face in the flesh would resemble the face of the soul that he had met in his dreams; how tall she had grown, and how the gold in her hair had turned to brown, yet leaving a bright mingling of the old tints; how his heart had thrilled at beholding her a beautiful woman. But he affirmed that he had closed his eyes when he

caught the first sound of her voice, so that he might only listen to the thought of her paper,— "The Divine in Art, and the Ideal of Creative Genius." Her voice had affected him like music heard among the trees; it had borne him into the world where they had formerly communicated, and he saw no longer the body, but only the maiden soul he had worshipped. And then he had fallen into despondency, and his eyes filled with tears. Poor and of unknown birth, what right had he, he asked himself, to this glorious vision? He felt his fingers close on his palms; he raised his heart to God, and vowed that if this gift might be his, he would only ask for union with her soul.

Mildred had paid little heed to the applause which had followed her paper, but left her place quickly as the exercises closed, and was lost in the moving audience. Her father was approaching her, and at his side was a

young man taller than he. The fine figure did not startle her, for she had imagined the handsome boy grown to a handsome man. A noble bearing, and an appearance such as became an inborn gentleman, she had anticipated. The brow had a broader sweep, and the mouth a firmer purpose; but both had been promised in the boy who sold papers. When she came beneath his eyes — it was then that she felt her own eyes droop. Tender as of old, there was a new vibration in them, like a ray of pure light falling to earth from some celestial planet. It had reached her poor, helpless heart,— a timid lake hidden in the shadows of night. And when he spoke her name, the masculine intonation, sweet and strong, was the mysterious voice that she had sometimes heard among the whispering leaves of the trees, when she had been sitting alone beneath their branches.

Arnor was to be their guest that

evening; would the shades of evening ever come? She listened for his approaching footstep till she thought her heart would cease to beat. When the bell rang, she flew down the stairway before a servant could open the door to her lover.

The hall of dark, rich carvings, lofty arch, and broad winding stairs adorned with antique and classic pictures and statuary, an ivory Christ in Italian art at prayer in a niche,—all presented an environment to which the young man was unaccustomed; yet no favored youth to the manner born could have entered with a nobler bearing than did Arnor Thayer.

Mildred's father had consented to an engagement between the lovers, and it was made in this first interview. Arnor clasped her in his arms and cried, "My darling, you were mine before the worlds began. It is the law of heaven that we meet. Neither mountains, nor

seas, nor the wide-spreading continents — no space, no eternity of years could keep our souls apart." She felt his tender kiss on her lips.

And now, in this far-away space and time from all that sweet experience, as the memory of it came rolling over her like the surge of the sea, she saw the window of her little room widen, and she floated away over the old fortification wall into the upper air. Her feet were dancing on the folds of diaphanous clouds; her arms were outstretched, and she was weaving garlands of many-hued flowers and binding them on the brow of this god-like youth. Together they swept from star to star through the deep beautiful sky of memory and hope.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME FEATURES OF A MOOD.

A KNOCK at the door, and as it almost simultaneously opened, a voice said, "Guten Morgen."

Mildred's soul made a rush to enter its earthly habitation. She pulled herself together, and cast about to see where her personality really was. She felt assured when she saw that the old fortification stood still, and that the linden-trees were no longer afloat.

Fräulein Jerome stood in the doorway, and at the occupant's bidding she moved towards a chair, which the young lady hastened to relieve of her hat, and made the Fräulein welcome.

Mildred now regarded her closely, and saw that she was more of a cripple than she had observed her to be the evening before. There was a slight hump on one shoulder and a hitch in one of her feet.

Fräulein Jerome detected some mental disturbance in her boarder, and attributed it to loneliness, so common to new arrivals. "A bit homesick?" she inquired, with that clairvoyant vision with which German women are apt to be gifted.

"No," responded Mildred, "oh, no indeed!" And she was on the point of saying, "I have just returned from home."

"I met Herr Thayer as I left my study; he was coming in to engage private lessons," continued Fräulein, "He lost a good deal of his lecture this morning. He appeared troubled that you have received no more attention, and would not permit me to delay; and I beg your pardon, Miss Heath, that I am so late."

There was a moment's pause; and then Mildred asked, with a tone that might imply a shade of disappointment as well as a spirit seeking to be en-

lightened, "Is there no department in this University open to women,—an annex, perhaps, where I could attend lectures?"

Fräulein sent a scrutinizing glance into the speaker's face, which for a second held to its purpose; then she rose and silently crossed to a seat nearer the window. Her step was slow, and Mildred was yet more impressed with this quaint, limping little personality in black. The frail body supported a remarkable head,—large, intellectual, and spiritual in appearance. The girl noted the softly-rounded brow, and the glossy black hair which was combed down about the points of the ears in smooth curves. Large, luminous, near-sighted eyes followed along the floor to guard her crippled feet; and as she sat down, she raised her hands towards her face as if to study them, at the same time supporting her elbows on the arms of her chair.

"This attitude of Fräulein Jerome," wrote Mildred in her note-book later on, "is so characteristic of this learned woman that it will bear elaborating. Teaching, talking, or sitting in silence, she invariably studies the mystery of her fingers. Never is the lesson so difficult or the conversation so exciting that she loses sight of her ten frail, nervous digits. It is the report whispered among students that she is Italian by birth, and linked to some ancestral mystery; and that she resorts to this artifice so that her eyes may never betray the secret."

"No, Miss Heath," replied Fräulein, her eyes still focussed on her hands, "there is no department in the Georg-Augustus or any other German college which will so much as allow you to take a peep within its doors to gather a fragment of wisdom to enrich your woman's head."

Mildred cast a glance out of the win-

dow towards the cardinal point that indicated America, and the revolutionary thoughts that started with the golden bridge returned; again she was contrasting her opportunities with Arnor's. A rising flush might have betrayed her thought, for Fräulein spoke up with feeling:—

"You do not want me for your teacher, and I do not care to teach women. They are so dissatisfied in these days that they waste their powers trying to break the fetters that never will be broken."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," broke in Mildred, confused to the point that her eyes moistened. "I am perfectly satisfied with such opportunities as offer. In fact, what I consider my best opportunities are surprises to me. The world is full of them. I would like to drift on"—she was going to say into art; "but my father holds very advanced ideas about woman's destiny.

He believes woman to be capable of superior development,—superior to man's from a spiritual standpoint. I think sometimes that I am held as a sort of experiment to prove this 'woman question.' Indeed my father might be called the 'new man'; and Mr. Thayer, who is deeply in sympathy with my father's ideas, he too is the 'new man.'

"As my father wrote you, Arnor and I are loyally engaged, and he might have told you that it is a soul union. We became acquainted by methods known only to the soul. Through a long period of years, in other worlds we have walked together in the spirit. I know it is the one aspiration of my beloved Arnor to lead me up to God's throne, when life is over, a woman whose destiny on earth has been fulfilled. There is no sacrifice which he would not make for this ideal other half, that is the mate of his higher self.

Separate or together, our spirits are ever united. I have in him a charge to keep, to help his soul attain its perfect development, to be led by me back to the great giver of gifts. Now, to me the attainment of all this blessedness seems possible. Life is a constant widening of the horizon; the rays of being starting at the heart, impelled by love, widening and ever widening, until the great circle includes all eternity. And, if you like, you may call this widening of the horizon education."

Mildred had spoken more than was her custom, and was half frightened at so many words from her own lips, which were for the most part closed, while she dwelt in the sweet seclusion of silence, with her pen or brush leisurely at work.

Fräulein Jerome's attention had been drawn to the speaker's face. "Hazy-blue eyes," she mentally observed; "far-away blues that come from the sky.

His are darker; but they both look as if they dwelt in other spheres."

It was only a brief moment that her eyes had wandered from their place; she took up the thread of conversation where Mildred had dropped it.

"That is the voice of sentiment, mere sentiment," she said, frowning almost fiercely at her fingers and wringing these fragile members. "Your intellect, if it were heard from, would complain of the loneliness, the exclusiveness, and the inferiority of your privileges as compared with those of your friend. And it may not be amiss for you to hear a few words from a woman's intellect, which it has been the aim of my life to cultivate. It may be as profitable as a German lesson, and I will make it so in part, for I will speak in German, with which I see you are quite familiar."

She raised her eyes to her pupil, and the face of the latter assured her that

she was ready to receive this extraordinary lesson.

"A girl with a deformed body and a poor father," began Fräulein, "has no use for sentiment. I was a cripple from infancy. My poor heart made an effort to be natural, to cultivate its loving propensities; but it was rudely repulsed, and then it withdrew into the shadow of my intellect, where it smouldered until it died.

"But my intellect asserted itself; it wrestled with fate, and I had great encouragement. My father was a pastor, with only the smallest pittance of a salary for his parish work; but he was a scholar, and had inherited a library of rare value. Tied to a chair, amid volumes that reached from floor to ceiling, with my father for teacher and companion, my brain travelled the world over; and I collected knowledge which would have entitled any man to a degree in the Georg-Augustus-University. For

you must know that I also had private instruction from some of the best professors in Göttingen, men who came to my father's library for information and were glad to exchange instruction for this privilege. I thought a great deal about it, and at length became so emboldened that fifteen years ago I asked for a degree from the Georg-Augustus to include general literature and six different languages. My attainments were well known to the Faculty, but the degree was refused. With such a degree I will say I entertained the hope, as my body was growing stronger, to establish myself in some foreign college for women as professor of German and general literature.

"Now, a will that has grown independent of a heart is a giant that recognizes no defeat. I tried every avenue; I knocked at every door; I implored every friend of my learned father; I bent my knee before the King of

Saxony, who is the supreme authority in this University. I might as well have asked for the crown on his head. 'You are a woman,' was his reply; 'go home and be a mother and a housekeeper.' I, a poor cripple, a repulsive sight to men! I thank God to-day, that I had no heart to suffer from this insult; and yet it was a killing frost. Ambition for original work, hope for a career in life,—an ideal so sweet to every human soul,—were blasted. Now I advance others, but I myself travel in the old beaten track. I correct theses which others have written, but I write none. I sit outside the walls of this University and give lessons to young men who enter in and win high places. I have buried my heart, and my intellect is slowly following to the same tomb!

"Ah me," she sighed, her head sinking forward, "I am foolish thus to intrude upon a stranger; but your face—

your eyes — I should think you would be besieged with confessions."

She sent an appealing look to Mildred, and weary with emotion, her head rested against her chair, and her eyes closed.

If Mildred had been a listener to Fräulein's story more than a sympathizer with her wrongs, it was not from any lack of real compassion; and if she had missed somewhat of the narrative, it was not because she had been unwilling to give her attention to it. The truth is, that it was the mood of the German woman which overpowered and enthralled her. Her art instinct was roused, and she had stored up in her memory every feature of the Fräulein's expression. Brushing now the tears from her eyes which were fastened on the listless figure, she crept toward the pad of fallen paper and the pencils that were in the heap with the Todtenfrau, and sinking down into the skirts of her

dress she arranged her materials. Out of a background of mysterious atmosphere such as genius can create with a few strokes of the pencil, there was evolved in profile one white, finely-rounded temple still beating with the tumult of wrongs, waves of tumbled-down hair shading a pale cheek like a mourning veil, and just the corner-curve of a grieved lip; in the lap of the portrait, in the folds of a black dress lay those ever restless fingers. Her model began to stir, and she thrust the memorandum paper deep into her pocket.

Before she retired that night, Mildred took out her note-book for her daily jottings and wrote: "The mood of that woman was thrust upon me. Art loves me, and I cannot escape it. I will trifle no more with this gift. God is my creator, and for him I will become creative in art. My father must sanction the step."

A few days later there appeared the following correction to these notes: "'Creative in art!' I do not mean it. I will still that voice; it is vanity, and not of the spirit. I am loved of the best man in the world. I shall never be creative, except as the mother of his children."

CHAPTER V.

DRIFTING.

A LOW fence enclosed the house of Fräulein Jerome, having a gate, which opened and shut with a sort of metallic groan, as if the hinge suffered pain at every movement. Thus the approach of a visitor was announced by a sound that was far from agreeable to ordinary ears; but it sent a thrill of joy to Mildred's heart and a tinge of color to her cheek. This occurred about every afternoon or evening in the week.

Aunty, in a very becoming gown, with lace about her wrists, and with her knitting in her hand, was seated at the lightest window to act as chaperone during the hour that Arnor Thayer's visit was supposed to last. For the first fifteen minutes the gallant young man chatted with the middle-aged lady about America, her cat, and other home interests to which her heart longed to

return; and then she would generally doze in her chair, her knitting falling to the floor and dropping stitches which required a half hour of Mildred's time, the next day, to pick up.

Love in a foreign land, amid ruins, broken fortifications, moss-grown houses and forgotten history is a dream of heaven which love does not know amid scenes of a more familiar environment. There is an atmosphere of mysticism, a sense of seclusion and of loneliness, which draw the lovers very near together. There is a feeling of interdependence and mutual trust which they whisper to each other as they walk arm in arm through the evening shadows of the strange Old World. It is all very natural, and thrills the heart with tender and devout faith as they renew their vows of undying devotion, as they look up to the lone moon which is the one familiar object that they have shared at home, and speak of that eter-

nity which is symbolic of their fidelity. The Old World they are living in signifies nothing to them from a material point of view. These people that are foreign to them, who speak another language, whose methods of living are unfamiliar, provide for their physical needs; but they have no part in the real wherewithal they shall live. Truly they are in a world of spirit, and this brief moment is their earthly heaven.

Our lovers were too happy to settle down to serious work. Arnor was punctual at his lectures, and Mildred was pains-taking with her page of irregular verbs in "Otto" and the reading of Schiller with Fräulein. Sometimes they greeted each other with "Guten Abend," and attempted a little conversation in the tongue they were studying; but they soon strayed off into some love idyl of Heine or Goethe, such as,—

"Du bist wie eine Blume,
So hold und schön und rein;"

or,—

"Im wunderschönen Monat Mai
Als alle Knospen sprangen."

When Fräulein Jerome suggested their reading Faust with her, Arnor maintained that Goethe's interpretation of love as set forth in that drama belonged to the rude ages, when man in his relation to woman was a grosser being; when he was ignorant of the soul's spiritual sensitiveness, of its close conjunction with invisible potencies, and of its possibilities of joy apart from the body. Mildred thought that Margarete's voice to Heinrich should have called him to the skies at the very beginning of their acquaintance, and not have been heard for the first time when she passed beyond the veil. Neither was in the mood for the philosophy of Goethe; they floated on in the ether of their new-found happiness. Highly

endowed as they were in realizing the spirit's supremacy, there were moments when they spoke of the possibility of passing out of the body without suffering the consciousness of death in a physical sense, believing this would be no miracle, but the simple fulfilment of a natural law.

In Mildred's lessons with Fräulein there was manifested a tender regard and great respect for her teacher, but no allusion was made to the strange conversation of their first meeting, and she showed no inclination to study her further as a model. The vision she caught that day was of the ideal woman that God had in mind at Fräulein Jerome's creation, but which failed of fulfilment in the flesh. This spiritual image, like a shadowy ghost, was hidden safe in her secret breast, related in a feeble way to a crumpled bit of paper at the bottom of her trunk. All through the months when she was drifting aim-

lessly on the billows of this sweet sensuous love, there were seasons when the white hands of this ghost were lifted imploringly to her to work out to completion her ideal conception. Those moments were bewildering, and there was a struggle between the woman and the artist. She was jealous of any voice, even of a breath of air that threatened to invade the absolute supremacy of one single personality that walked in the flesh at her side. To abide in the radiance of this love she was willing to go empty-souled, unfed, unhoused, through life,—conditions that were simply impossible, since love supplied them all.

A rainy day which kept her indoors, and a busy afternoon for Arnor at the University, left Mildred with idle hands; and the allurements of art found a favorable opportunity to urge their claim. Her bedroom opened into her sitting-room, as we have been informed

in her opening notes. She went to Fräulein and requested that the maid be sent to regulate the bedroom only at a certain hour in the day, as she was going to begin a few sketches, and did not wish to be interrupted when at work. She had observed that the door could be made fast with lock and key when she was absent. She had provided herself with a limited supply of art material before she had left home, which was shipped with her other baggage.

Within an hour after her interview with Fräulein her easel was set up before a north window which furnished excellent light, in full view of the Johannes Tower, in the loft of which the watchman with his family dwelt, ready at any moment, day or night, to sound an alarm from his horn, if the town was threatened by fire or an invading foe.

Mildred made a study of the old

watchman with his horn at his lips, amid the lonely shadows of the dark old tower, and showed it to Fräulein. It proved her innocence in seeking this self-imprisonment, and quieted her conscience as to the half-truth she had spoken.

The work of the true artist begins with a very humble prayer,— a pleading with God to unfold himself in the object before which the artist sits. The young girl had no purpose beyond this prayer. But prayer, if sincere, is the greatest stimulant to work; and Mildred Heath *was* sincere. Without knowing it, she was praying to God for something she very much desired.

There was a mere trifling with her brushes at first, with light and shade, sunshine and shadow. These preliminary features appeared and disappeared, with no visible promise beyond streaks and patches of paint, and threatened to go on indefinitely; but her trifling was

arrested one day at beholding on her canvas a profile, with one rounded white temple struggling to life amid all the wild confusion of its surroundings. The hours of work were prolonged after this, and she was often seated before the north window till the shades of evening fell.

As she grew alive to the revelation of the invisible on her canvas, Mildred became indifferent to other interests. The veil which lifted before the image of her ideal was converted, as it were, into a wall shutting out the world from her view. It was as if God refused to manifest himself to her, only as she gave herself exclusively to him.

There are no data extant, to my knowledge, from which one may gain definite information as to the awakening moment when Arnor Thayer gave himself unreservedly to the study of the science of law; which study led him on,

in subsequent years, to an acquaintance with learned men in many lands, to extensive research in national libraries of foreign cities, and still later to the publication of several important works. His interest grew stronger at the University when Professor Eicherhorn began his special course; and Mildred's note-book about this time speaks of his tracing the statute law of civil government back to the law of the stone and plant, and adds: —

"My Arnor to all appearance is greatly wrought upon by this idea of the unfolding and correlation of parts; and if I comprehend him, he thinks it possible to discover one system of law for every tribe and tree, every nation, man, or animal, however rude or civilized, that has ever attempted a social existence; and he says animals and trees do attempt a social existence." Later on she says: "My Arnor appears to be hesitating, like a river which has

flowed steadily on between narrow banks, but at length has come to an open country where the way is broader, and more than one channel invites it to the sea. 'Not to protect man's material interests alone, but to advance his moral and spiritual nature,'— this is the high office of law, as I caught his meaning in a brief conversation we had the other evening. I was so impressed with his earnestness that I am sure I quote him correctly.

"Ah, my beloved Arnor, whatever course you take, you will have an eye single to truth, which is the star set in the firmament for great souls to follow."

CHAPTER VI.

THE INNER TEMPLE.

THE rusty hinge of the gate was less distinct in announcing a visitor, or Mildred's ear was less alert, for she heard nothing till the voice of Katharina informed her that Herr Thayer was in her parlor. Startled, she dropped her brush, threw aside her paint-apron, and hastened to freshen up her toilet with clean linen, not forgetting to place a flower in the bosom of her dress taken from the gift that was sent by Arnor every morning.

While waiting, sitting on the black hair-cloth sofa, the young man was not conscious of any wasted time. If weary, as he frequently was, the atmosphere of the room was like balm to his weariness, for it was touched with the sweetness of *her* breath; it played over his face and kissed his brow.

"Love, love," he murmured; "the

first law of life is the law of love. How vast is the domain of this law!"

The revery ran on, his sight being dreamily fixed on the fading light of the old fortification and the deepening shadows of the linden-trees. How can human nature attain to its true proportion? How can the individual human being discover his aim, his vocation, and the true use of his faculties? How can he attain to his god-like freedom? These were some of the questions he whispered to the trembling branches; and they answered back, "This can be attained only by man's association with man."

"But what will protect the individual against the selfishness of men, against the crushing pressure of their ambition?"

These last words were addressed to ghostly shadows in long togas stalking beneath the nightly pall of the trees. They were the spirit forms of great

men who had studied jurisprudence at the Georg-Augustus and other great seats of learning on earth, and were now pursuing further studies in the schools of eternity. This was their solemn response: —

"Address your questions, young man, to science. The ethical nature of man in all nations and under all suns tends to impart a scientific character to the study of the laws by which his social actions are regulated. That which steadies man and keeps him firm to his purpose, that which protects him against the imperfection of each and the selfish ambition of all, that which imperiously addresses all and yet lovingly whispers to each, is law, scientific law. You are young. God commands you, humanity appeals to you, to help lift the grinding heel, the oppressive wrongs committed in the name of law,— ignorant, unnatural, unscientific law."

Mildred's step reached his side and

her hand was laid on his shoulder before he was aware of her approach. Then how eagerly he clasped her to his throbbing heart,—almost fiercely, as if he would see her engulfed in the mighty whirlpool where he was struggling. The next moment his mind lost its introspective bent, as his eyes looked into the lovely eyes so close to his; and the tears started when he thought how he had been absorbed by any other emotion than that of joy over their meeting.

Arnor was not alone in suffering this sting of conscience. Mildred too was gazing into beautiful eyes, dark, deep, and intense with love for her and all that is noble in the world. How could she have forgotten the hour of his visit! But the door of habit is not easily closed. Had they not lived in dreamland since their childhood? Had they not thought their deepest thoughts without words, loved in silence, and communicated their love on sightless

wires? Had they not built fairy castles of invisible fabric; and had not all this been done within the speechless chambers of the soul?

Sitting so close together that the ear of each could catch the other's heart pulsations, the vision of both began to wander forth from the window, across Fräulein Jerome's yard, beyond the old wall, and was lost in the moonlight sifted down beneath the trees. Their words fell to whispers, and finally were lost in profound silence.

Aunty had relinquished her duty as chaperone, and resumed her American custom of going to bed with the chickens. The lovers were alone in the stillness of the evening shadows; alone, each with his and her own thoughts. Mildred's mental vision strayed to a bit of high light in her canvas, which gave promise of being the creative centre. A few more touches of luminous color, a slightly stronger atmosphere, and the

white temple and nervous fingers would throb with living life. In spite of himself, the mental vision of the young man wandered to that headland in the vast ocean of human progress which he believed to be an unexplored if not undiscovered region in the science of natural law. She could not speak of her vision; it would not fit to the gross medium of words. He dared not hint at the object of his; it was so far away and bespoke such a mighty journey.

If the lovers grew silent in their interviews, pensive and thoughtful, they were not sad.

"Are you happy, my darling?" asked Arnor one evening later when he visited her. "Are your days happily spent?"

"I am — oh, so happy!" was her reply. "How is it with you, my love?"

"It is well with me; but remember, my own, if you were to utter one cry of discontent, or suffer one silent pang of

loneliness, it would bring me out of heaven, to lay myself at your feet;" and he pressed his lips to the soft tints of her hair.

"But, my Arnor, there is no heaven, where you are, in which I am not present. Your paradise is mine; or if it be any other state, there I dwell with you. I rise on the wings of your love in the morning, and drift down the setting sun with you at night."

But there came the time when their meetings were very infrequent; when indeed they were short, and terminated with a pressure of the hand and scarcely a spoken word. It was whispered by the Americans who crossed the ocean with them, that a coldness had sprung up between this devoted pair. Some one had seen Mildred on the wall when Arnor approached, and each had turned away from the other as if by mutual consent, and sought different directions. Fräulein Jerome was appealed to; but

she shook her head, and scrutinized her fingers to no purpose. To her, even, the mystery was great, and all her leisure moments were absorbed in trying to solve it; in which she confessed she made no headway.

To all appearance the lovers were radiantly happy. Mildred was always singing or joking with Katharina over her coffee-cup. Fräulein loved them better than any two beings moulded in the flesh that she had ever met. They affected her like music; their presence together was a symphony. Her life had never been so harmonious as since this American girl came to dwell beneath her roof. She wept as she mentioned their seemingly unfortunate state.

Mildred's interest in "Otto" had entirely subsided; and she would brook no analysis of Schiller. "Please recite 'Die Hoffnung,' liebes Fräulein; that is all I wish to hear to-day." Or it

might be a choice bit from some other poet that she asked for.

There was no method in such lessons, and they were far from being satisfactory to a teacher of Fräulein Jerome's pedagogical ideas. It troubled her conscience to be receiving compensation for instruction which she was not imparting; but her pupil insisted, and she dared not refuse this magnetic personality and those misty blue eyes that lead you to the sky.

The young artist failed to reach that moment in her portrait when, as she mentally termed it, "God said, let there be light, and there was light." That indefinable spiritual-intellectual quality which she had recognized in the Fräulein's mood as the beauty of her soul eluded her brush. An idea flashed upon her; she begged Fräulein, as a very great favor, to take up the bit of personal history to which she had so kindly introduced her at their first

meeting, and to tell her how she had risen to her present enviable position as instructor of all these foreign pupils; how she had overcome the vast obstacles that lay in her way.

The renewal of the story was a rare moment for our artist, who was watching for a return of the former state of mind. The nervous fingers of the German woman clasped each other as if they had been long separated; they tingled to the very tips, and the color crept up her arms and tinged her neck and the white oval of her temple. Her recital was now more impassioned if possible than at the opening chapter of her history; it betrayed a spirit of intense rivalry and a burning glow of triumph. Yes, she had risen in spite of her sex; her teaching was coveted more than the lectures of the average professor in the Georg-Augustus; her income surpassed his; she was better known in England and America; she

was in constant reception of letters and gifts from her pupils long after their return to their native land.

There was more eloquence, to which Mildred paid no heed; for the spiritual current which ran like fire through the woman's physical being had powerfully affected the artist. She changed her seat three times for a view of this wonderful composition at different angles, without the speaker having a suspicion that she was posing as a model.

CHAPTER VII.

BY MOONLIGHT.

THOUGH the shades of evening were upon her when Fräulein ceased speaking, Mildred repaired to her studio. The moon rose early, and it was at its full. In that dim, spectral effulgence,—an atmosphere of blue and ghostly white, tempered by the soft light of the stars, with a background of earth's shadows, flanked by the deeper and darker shadows of the old fortification, with the tall, black branches of the lindens keeping watch,—she worked until midnight. Her brain was on fire with God's mighty inspiration; his omnipotent hand was over her hand that held the brush; his finger pointed to the colors and tints. A flash of light came in at the window, and she saw her ideal concept brought to perfection on the canvas; she heard a voice out of the night saying, "God has set his seal to your work;

it is the birth of a soul, and you are the author of its being."

From sheer exhaustion Mildred fell asleep, with no preparation other than to drop her paint-apron, and draw a pillow beneath her head at the foot of her couch. For hours all consciousness of the material world was lost. She woke just as a dim shaft of day-break crept in at her window. She watched it steal along the floor and touch the legs of her easel. She knew she was awake, for she thought of the light reaching higher, until it shone on the face of the portrait and wondered what the day was going to reveal.

At that instant a hand clasped her hands that lay folded together as she rested on her side. A breath swept across her cheek and touched her hair, and in the breath she caught a whisper, "Darling, to-morrow is our wedding day."

The hand held hers so tightly she could not move a muscle.

"Arnor is dead," she gasped; "and what I have to do at this moment is to take careful note of his spirit's presence. Let me be calm, and sure I am awake, and not generating some illusory figure."

She held her head motionless in its first position on the pillow, and made observation of every object within the radius of her open eyes. There was the white sheet serving as a door to the press; there was her apron thrown across the chair; her father's portrait was just stealing out of the shadows on the wall. No one could question the authority of such evidence. Mildred's muscles ached with the tension of her emotions, and she hardly drew her breath. She could still feel the pressure of the hands. Straightway the whisper returned: "Darling, I am not dead; my body is sleeping in my chamber. Man has two souls or selves; one sleeps, while the other watches or waits.

These two selves differ in degree, and as the higher self passes on the lower self succeeds it; and it is only in the more perfect man that the two selves are blended in one. I come to tell you that to-morrow" — the breath faded away before the sentence ended; strength was wanting to complete it.

Mildred's hands were loosened, and she saw a shadow flit across the bar of daylight and vanish. She sprang to her feet and sought her note-book, and creeping into the faint flush of morning made a careful entry of her own state of mind and every detail of this mysterious visitation. Then she hastened to her easel, where a great disappointment awaited her. The portrait bore no trace of the mental experience of the night through which she had passed. Her brushes were damp with the oils of her tubes, and streaks of paint had been dragged across her palette. Some of the effects resembled pools of quiver-

ing moonlight; others, fragments of white hands and glimpses of white faces amid the dark leaves of the trees. But not a stroke of progress had been made on her picture.

"What does it mean?" she cried. "Can a picture be painted by moonlight, and vanish at the approach of day? With my eyes shut I can see — oh, so clearly! — every feature of the vision bathed in the silvery rays; but open them, and it is gone! Was it a trance? Was it a dream? Has the soul fingers, that it can mix paints and apply them? Has the mind a wall, on which a picture can be hung to be viewed only by the inward sight? My labor has not been in vain, be it trance or illusion. The good thing cannot go; it has been revealed to me — every line of light and shadow. Thank God for this glorious revelation! I can now finish my work.

"And the strange visitation! was

that a trance? I was wide awake, and set one self to watch the other self; and another self to watch that, to see that it was vigilant and honest. Illusion! it was the most real thing of my life. Oh, my Arnor! God holds you so close to his nature that you are a part of him. Where his omnipresent being cleaves the air, you can follow and do his bidding in the vast realm of empty space. I love you more than I love the sweet air of heaven that I inhale with every breath."

She threw herself on her knees and hid her face in her bed.

The sun had risen so high that it found an opening in the curtains of the east window, and the rays fell upon her hair and played with the gold tints that sparkled amid the brown; and the gold was so abundant that it lighted the chamber with its reflected splendor.

The prayer that she uttered was threefold. She thanked God for his

divine manifestation and his promise not to forsake her art. In the part that was devoted to her father she begged that he might not be disappointed in the future of her life. "What is destiny? It is God's purpose, and I must unfold my being in his way. Your great soul will utter no word of complaint, but may your dear heart not be grieved."

Her closing petition was long and profound; her body swayed with emotion, but the plea which went up from her lips was only heard by the ear of the Most High.

CHAPTER VIII.

BRIDAL ROSES.

"To-day I must see Arnor," repeated Mildred several times, as if one self were warning the other not to falter. Her voice trembled, and her face bore evidence of great inward conflict. She sifted some costly perfumes into her bath, and went from room to room making a rich and beautiful toilet. Standing before a mirror, she arranged the folds of a soft fabric in creamy blue; tints that are frequently seen in a rift of cloud when the sun is struggling with the mist, a moment before the filmy veil which covers the blue is rent. A ribbon of harmonious colors encircled her slim waist, and she fastened the soft lace at her shoulders with a touch of exquisite finish.

A flower was wanting to complete her costume, and Mildred turned the key of her door, at which her lover's morning

gift was sure to be waiting. What she beheld was a large bowl full of roses of the choicest varieties, which must have been ordered from some neighboring city. Every rose was white, glittering in pearl and silver, suggesting the pale moonlight in which she had worked during the night just passed. She bent over the aerial things, sunk in profound meditation.

"'To-morrow is our wedding day.' Here is proof of the reality of that voice which whispered in my ear. Oh, God, I feel as if my soul were leaving my body; give me strength!"

Instead of one rose, Mildred drew out several, bestowed a kiss upon the bunch, and thrust them into her bosom. The long stems pierced the tender flesh; but she pressed them harder, as if she would drive them to her heart.

Katharina knocked at the door, bearing the tray with breakfast. Without opening wider than sufficient to pass

her hand, the occupant of the room reached out a letter which she requested the servant to take to Mr. Thayer.

"Take my breakfast away, Katharina. No matter when you bring it — not until I ring. Be sure and deliver the letter at once."

Mildred's face was white; her limbs refused to support their burden; she sank down on the old black hair-cloth sofa. It was where Arnor and she had sat together in sweet communion. She laid her cheek against it, and kissed the coarse stuff. The thorns of the roses were cruel; she wished they would let out her life's blood; she wished she might escape from the body. A mysterious sense of the unknown, a strange and lonely future, some event too mighty for her youthful years to grapple, loomed up before her. The zephyrs of the warm May morning stole through an open window, played with

her hair and made bold to listen to some broken, half-whispered sentences.

"Is my soul wedded to his soul; is that all; are we to walk apart, in this strange soul communion, unlike the world? Why am I so happy, even though I do not see his living face for days? How is it that I would be happier at this hour sitting before my easel, his love hovering like the atmosphere about me, inspiring, guiding, breathing joy and life into my work, than to be here waiting for his bodily presence? But if it is thus with me, and otherwise with him — oh, God! I must know how it is with him; the hour has come when I must fathom his soul. For him I can sacrifice my art, my love" — she bit her lips, and pressed the thorns harder — "to live with him in the flesh — to be his wife. To be my Arnor's wife! is this a sacrifice of love? My Heavenly Father, to what has it come? Have I not always expected to be his wife — to honor, serve, and obey" —

The door opened and Katharina announced the young man with whose invisible soul her soul was thus wrestling.

Arnor Thayer approached the sofa hesitatingly. The girl whose life had been one joyous summer wore a look of troubled experience, and the appeal in her eyes was pathetic. The soft laces that fell from her open sleeve, the creamy blue that reflected the sky, the one solitary ring which glistened on her finger, the petals which were dropping like tears from the crushed roses to her lap,— these were a part of her, and altogether made a ravishing harmony. He bent low, almost to her feet.

" My bride, my lovely bride," he murmured in a whisper muffled with emotion, and pressed her hands to his lips. Then rising by virtue of his own strong will, he stood erect before her, his soul looking down into her soul, till it found its way to the heart which the roses were piercing.

"My bride in the spirit,— in the spirit only, for time and eternity,— this is our wedding day! for this life and the life hereafter! forever! forever!"

His words were charged with holy authority, as if a priest in sacerdotal robes, with consecrated censer, was celebrating a divine church ceremony.

In an instant, Mildred was on her feet to regard his face more closely. He was scrupulously clad, and his countenance beamed with that radiance which heaven only lends to man when a victory has been won which has waked the harps of the angels.

"Arnor," she cried, "my own beloved, my husband in the spirit, I am your wife! Raise your hand — here in mine. Let us reach our hands up to God; and my mother's departed spirit that is waiting near us shall be our witness."

If his voice had been that of the high-priest, hers was that of the high-priestess.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRD'S JUBILEE.

THE pallor of Mildred's cheek fled, and the velvety skin was touched as if with the reflected blush of a rose in her bosom. She moved from her place at his side, and put her hands on his breast, looking into his face.

"My dear Arnor, this is all so strange; but it was to be." She spoke with deep thoughtfulness. "You know how few times we have ever alluded to our marriage; as if an unseen finger were laid on our lips to hold back the word, notwithstanding the mutual pledge we had solemnly made. But it was not for the want of love — could ever souls love more than ours? Tell me that, my own dear one."

"Never, never, my darling! If God can make love greater than ours, he has not revealed it in this world," he exclaimed ardently, folding her to his heart.

"But, even now," she continued, her eyes again seeking his, "even now, since we have set the seal to this act, are we sure we are wholly justified? Let us be frank — I will speak plainly. Can you continue to serve a woman's soul so withdrawn from you? Will our souls find each other in eternity, if we never meet again in these material bodies?"

Her voice fled in a frightened whisper, and the atmosphere seemed to shine about her as if a star had dropped from heaven and scattered its radiance of gold.

The young man's sight strayed beyond the window, miles beyond any point that he saw. His eyes were wide with that strangeness which sees things that are not visible.

The old fortification was a flood of sunshine, and the buds of the linden-trees felt the life of the awakening spring. A bird atilt on a lilac-bush near the window poured forth a sweet

melody. A passing peasant girl recalled the snatch of a classic love song (German children are full of songs) and setting her words to the bird's accompaniment they sang together,—

"Liebe, ewigkeit! Liebe, ewigkeit!"

The duet jubilee was caught by the wind and borne to the ears of the silent couple. It evoked a smile in their faces, recalled to Arnor what his beloved had been saying, and enabled him to reply,—

"Oh that I possessed the gift of the bird, I would sing to you, and you should know the emotions of my soul! But what language can express these emotions? Is it music or art — or silence? I think it is only silence. My vocabulary is scant; and is it a wonder? We possess only what we use.

"To enable me to communicate my love to you the elemental forces of

Nature have given me speech,— the unseen and unheard; those speechless voices that fill the air have been my messengers. I am speaking now of those deep, silent, fruitful years of our lives when our spiritual natures grew to their greatest unfolding.

"We owe everything to your dear father, and let us remember him to-day. His restrictions kept us strangers in the world's limited sense of human fellowship. In our helplessness we cried out to God, and he heard our prayer. In the multitude of his laws, yet unrevealed to man, he taught us the mystery of one law, which opened the way for our glad spirits to take their flight through space independent of material embodiment. He taught us the chemistry of clouds, the mystery of darkness and light, and the cipher in sounds and whispers. How can you entertain a doubt of the soul's happiness when it thus transcends the body;

when it may close its eyes at night, fold itself as in a cloud, shut the door of its translucent chamber and depart to be with its beloved? Can the body suffer when the spirit is free and with its own?

"This world, for you and me, is only a tenting-ground where we abide for a night. Through æons we have voyaged thus together; every change of material form has brought us into the knowledge of a higher spiritual life, leaving the old self to inhabit the earth, till it too in its turn follows on and enters the higher state.

"For souls thus joined together earthly vows are a sacrilege; they are a step backward, at which Nature revolts, and which she punishes by a life of unrest, of work unfulfilled, and ideals unrealized. We have had a foretaste of this punishment which surely awaited us, in the unrest which we have suffered. There have come to us weariness and

longing for the old conditions dependent upon our bodies; but at that happy period our souls were far more visible than our bodies, removed as they were from the shadow of the body, shining in their own free and open light. The offspring born of such a spirit union may be a brave act, an unselfish deed, a noble life. God knows the world is in need of such offspring, and he will care for the fulfilment of all his laws, and it is not for us to take thought therefor.

"Will my soul find yours in eternity, you ask? As surely as the star that rises at night must steer for that point in the heavens toward which the finger of God points, so surely, my love, shall I know you, and come to claim you. You, my star, will shine with a glory that surpasseth all other stars; for of such is love born, and wed in the spirit."

"It is well," said Mildred. She spoke low and tenderly, and smiled. "Let us

stand a few moments in the lingering fragrance of the roses, and hearken for the benediction of my mother, and of the recording angel."

The sun was now at its mid-day point in the tops of the lindens; the dark old tower had stepped wholly out of its gloom, and was bathed in the glory of the spring.

"Liebe, ewigkeit! Liebe, ewigkeit!"

trilled, once more, the robin's accompaniment; he had been carrying sticks and straws for his wife to make their nest, and stopped again before the window.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATE OF FRÄULEIN'S PORTRAIT.

For half an hour this spiritually made bride and bridegroom walked together under the lindens. Slowly the figure in the creamy-blue gown passed in and out beneath the shadow of the branches; her step was light, and the voices of both were happy and free.

At Mildred's request, Arnor drew off the betrothal ring and placed it on the third finger of her right hand.

"Now I can look upon it when I work," she said; "and it will keep me ever in close communion with the event of this holy day."

The sun shone upon them with its soft rays, and the birds responded to their conversation with sweet spring notes. They stopped, lingered a few moments over some final words concerning their plans for the future, smiled a parting which no language

could utter, and went their separate ways,—he to his study, and she to her studio.

Mildred's bridal dress was quickly removed. "I shall want it no more," she soliloquized, as she folded the lace within the skirt for protection, and laid it in a perfumed trunk. She lifted her arms; they were light as wings, and the air seemed to bear her up. "I will fly to the sky," she whispered with joy; "and I will furnish a home there in jasper and gold, where my love will come at night, and his soul will meet my soul, and we will call it 'The Soul's Rest.'"

The imagination of Mildred sought to weave other beautiful furnishings of rainbow hues and tints into this airy castle, but the visionary abode was invaded by an impious visitor and it quickly melted away.

Katharina entered bringing the afternoon lunch of tea and toast. Not re-

ceiving any encouragement to linger she immediately withdrew. Mildred dropped into an easy chair by the side of the little table where the tray had been deposited, and listlessly stirred the contents of her cup and broke the crisp pieces of bread. She closed her eyes and her cheek inclined upon her hand. A stray sunbeam crept into the waves of her hair and frolicked with the silken meshes. The lace in her bosom rose and fell with her gentle breathing; a smile on her lips and a half-audible whisper told that she was already with the guest of her "airy castle." When she woke the shadows of the lindens were stealing across the street in the direction of the garden gate and its creaking hinge. They looked like the mighty forms of giants creeping on thus stealthily and threatening to invade the peaceful domain of Fräulein Jerome. She fancied she heard the gate open, and a return of the footstep that had

been so musical to her ears during the early months of her stay in the old town. She gazed on, till the giants entered her room and their shadows cast a pall over her chair and table; till they draped her windows and finally closed the shutters of night.

Some days after the laying away of the bridal gown, Mildred's diary was resorted to, and it furnishes information that is valuable, as it continues the history of her art, and reveals the peculiar manner of its progress. It must have been several days later that she resumed her diary, for Fräulein told the "other Americans" that the young girl was not seen by any member of the family during that time, and if she left the house it was in the deep watches of the night, when no eye saw her nor ear heard her step. As was customary, Katharina took her meals to her room; sometimes the food was tasted, but often it was not touched, though Fräulein sent up the

choicest viands prepared by her own hands.

The "other Americans" were again disturbed in their minds and lively with their tongues over this new freak of their young country-woman; but now Aunty came forward with an explanation. It was the first time that the quiet old lady had spoken so much at length since she arrived in this German city.

Her niece, she explained, had always had "spells" (as she expressed it) of disappearing from the family, and her father indulged her in the habit. She was supposed to sleep during these "spells," which usually lasted two or three days, and sometimes longer. Her father maintained that her organism required these seasons of rest, and he would allow no intrusion upon her solitude. When she came forth from her chamber, her face was like a star that had newly risen in the

heavens,—so bright, fresh, and happy it looked.

Oblivious to this outside curiosity and interest, and unconscious of any world except the boundaries set to her own experience and the emotions of her own heart, Mildred writes in her diary:—

"Dear Mother [she frequently addressed her notes to her mother's spirit], I have worked on the portrait at intervals now for several days, and slept between the periods of work. I could not see clearly the likeness I was seeking to copy, except when my eyes were closed; and then I frequently fell into slumber, and became discouraged and despondent in consequence, for I was making no material progress with my ideal.

"I will call it a trance that befell me. I may as well call it thus, for I have no desire to quarrel with conventional opinion, and I have no vocabulary with which to dispute science and philos-

ophy. They have words, and I have proof; more, I have perfect satisfaction and peace in the society of the whispering shadows.

"It was one evening, not many minutes after Katharina had set down the tray in my sitting-room and lighted the lamp (I saw the light beneath the door). I was as wide awake as ever I was in my life, and took note (as I did the other night) of things in my room, — my father's portrait, my easel, and apron on the chair. Suddenly I was startled by a noise, as if some one was pouring water from my pitcher into my bowl. I fully expected to see Katharina, but in an instant I recalled that my bedroom door was locked; my memory was clear on that point.

"Out of the invisible ether there was evolved a figure right before my canvas. 'Arnor,' I called, 'is it you?' But it was not he. It was a man in middle life, with a shock of hair touched with

grey, and wearing a blouse. In his left hand he held a palette and several paint-brushes, and pointed to my canvas. 'Destroy this study,' were his words. I had never heard the voice before. 'It will furnish you no further inspiration; but it will feed your vanity and encourage idleness. Let no one see it; beginners should hear no praise; artists should hear no praise till they have become so meek, sitting at the feet of Nature, that they turn away in pity at the world's misapprehension of the magnitude of art. Paint no more portraits; turn to the landscape; live in the fields; go to the great teachers for instruction.'

"I strained my ears for another sound. The invisible air closed up the place where the figure stood, and from which the voice had emanated. 'Who are you?' I cried. 'Destroy this portrait! It is — it is' — my words plunged boldly forward — 'it is a soul!'

"I held my breath and hearkened, until I had to struggle to gasp again. The silence was unbroken."

From all that can be gathered from incoherent passages and impassioned, half-uttered sentences that follow in the diary, there ensued a fierce struggle between the admonitions of the strange visitor and the desire of her own heart to carry forward the portrait to completion. She plunged into work, and waged war with the opposing forces which she realized were about her, in her persistence to bring forth the moonlight revelation. But every touch of the brush hid the secret instead of revealing it.

"Alas! alas!" she writes, "the face in my picture is surely dying. The vision grows dim; I struggle to see it, but cannot. I can no longer see it with my eyes open or closed. If God ever set his seal to my art, he has withdrawn it."

Not many days after this painful soliloquy, Mildred went out for a walk, before the family had risen or a being was astir, and did not return for many hours. When she did return, her hands were laden with flowers that bore the fragrance of the woods; her face was aglow with health, and wore a look of calm resignation. She went to her easel and removed the little brass heads which held the canvas at the four corners, and laid it on the floor. With some white paint she covered every square inch,— the white oval of the temple, and the Fräulein's nervous fingers. Then she scattered the flowers over the whole.

"This is as it should be," she murmured; "and this is the way all vanity and foolish ambition should be enshrouded. I have great respect for my model, and the violets are devoted to her memory. No one has seen the study but the spirits that have looked

over my shoulder; and I thank God I have been spared by their heaven-sent protection! Oh, Arnor, you would have been faithful to the voice of the spirit. I have been vainly ambitious, self-willed, and justly punished."

CHAPTER XI.

AUFWIEDERSEHEN.

MILDRED'S trunks were strapped, and Aunty's knitting, together with all her other belongings, were packed in other trunks; and her bonnet-strings were tied securely under her fat chin.

In one corner of Mildred's hand-bag was a letter from her father, which had taken several American stamps to bring across the Atlantic. He had learned of the strange marriage in a voluminous package of her notes which she had sent to him, and from a long confession from Arnor. By their ultra spiritual development, and by their union in a previous state of existence, which in their dreams they could recall (which faith he shared with them), combined with the work in life that fate seemed to have thrust upon them and Providence had designedly put in far-separated paths, he was overpowered, and acknowledged his ap-

preciation of their humility and devotion to truth. He sent them his love and blessing.

Mr. Heath, be it stated here, was a well-known philanthropist, whose life had been one of devoted service for humanity; and his memory is treasured to-day in the hearts of the American people. He rejoiced when he heard that Arnor, whom he loved next to his own daughter, was going to abandon the commercial side of his profession, to take up the ethical and humanitarian; for he saw his own task shifted to the strong, youthful shoulders of this son. He had secretly anticipated this change, and silently prayed that it might come to pass; for, unknown to Arnor, he had instituted legal research and persistently carried it forward, until light had fallen upon the young man's ancestral line; and the discovery had been made that the stock he sprang from was one of reformers of noble zeal. The lawyers

whom Mr. Heath employed had also brought to light a modest inheritance for Arnor, which had trickled down through generations and was waiting for the legal claimant. This discovery was made several years ago, and the inheritance had furnished ample means for the young man to carry forward his studies until now, when his horizon was widening out into this vast field of action. Mr. Heath foresaw that Arnor's present income would not be sufficient for his future career, and he wrote his daughter suggesting that she share with Arnor her own income, which was largely in excess of her needs. By a strange concurrence her letter crossed his on the ocean, begging him to consent to this very thing, and to make it a legal and permanent act. "It belongs to him more than to me," she wrote; "for he will make it of more service to the world, is more worthy of it, and I love him better than I love my own life."

Fräulein Jerome accompanied her boarders to the Weber Strasse station, her eyes bent the while on her hands, though it is doubtful if she could see them for the tears that clouded her sight. Katharina was allowed to delay her morning chores, and she followed the carriage and baggage-wagon. Mildred looked back, and seeing Katharina with her eyes on the ground, and remarking that her step was measured and solemn, she smiled; for the attitude reminded her of her first interview with the girl, the morning after her arrival, and of the pose of the Todtenfrau.

"Poor Katharina," she said, and there was a mingling of genuine tenderness with her smile; "she has no reason to sorrow at my departure; no one has. We never leave anything or anybody behind us that has become a part of us; no soul can forsake another soul that by the law of life belongs to it. If you, my dear Fräulein, and your family

welcome the return of my spirit to you, as you would welcome my body, you will soon be aware of my presence; for I love you well and will come to you as often as I can."

Arnor Thayer stood on the platform at the station, the incarnation of all that is beautiful and noble in manhood. The graceful figure of Mildred alighted in his arms, and she caught the words, "my wife!" The fragrant breath that swept across his ear bore the response, "my husband!"

They turned a few steps aside, and conversed in low tones. Mildred knew that her beloved was to leave immediately for Russia, and that a few months later he was to travel to the Orient to study the government and laws in the East, especially the moral effect and race benefit of colonization in those countries. Her father had engaged Arnor to make investigation for him in the last-named questions, for material

Lac.

which he wished to use in his own private studies.

The sun was shining on the old fortification by whose wall about the town they had so many times walked together. They fell to musing as they watched the autumn leaves piling themselves up in yellow patches on the ground, or flying away to nooks and corners in the fences to hide from the winter storms. This parting was the severest test their souls had ever encountered; but they maintained their silence, and dwelt on the thought of God's wonderful laws, which they had tested and knew were unfailing, until their spirits rose above the bondage of the flesh and its lingering enthralment, into the bliss and freedom of spirit union.

"Aufwiedersehen," was the parting word. "It is only for a day; sleep cometh."

The train sped its way across the country. Aunty sat quietly in her seat,

glad to get a start in the direction of America, and counted the cities and towns, and remarked upon the ruins and lofty cathedrals which the flying engine left behind them. Mildred communed with her thoughts, and saw only the world invisible. Not a tower, ruin, or cathedral did she note; not the slightest heed did she pay to the noise of the rumbling wheels, or the motion of the rolling car. Speechless and silent her body was carried on, and her soul followed and overtook it, at its destination in a far-distant city.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WILLOW THAT WEEPS.

It was five years before Mildred Heath's name was mentioned in the circles of art; and then it was by the merest accident that the whole of Paris knew it. She had studied with the best masters, and received every encouragement that money and a devoted father, who had come abroad to live with her, could provide; and she had produced some commendable work in landscape painting. But when a canvas reached a certain stage she abandoned it. She would not allow a piece to be put on exhibition, not even to be hung in her own private apartments or the apartments of her father. She begged her teachers to speak no word of praise; all she sought was their criticism.

"It is not well for beginners to be praised," was her excuse to her father

when he sought to understand the rigorous treatment of her art. "Beginners should hear no praise; it makes them vain and idle. Don't call my pictures art; they are only studies."

Mildred became attached to a certain willow-tree which hung lonely over a brook, in a sequestered spot, and sat for hours alone by it. A sad accident had befallen one of its branches; a spiteful flash of lightning had torn through its members, and the once symmetrical tree hung its head and mourned for its youthful grace which had forever departed. She began to paint it, and grew as thin as a shadow seeking to discover in the atmospheric life of this tree, in the weeping beauty of its branches, that note which is in harmony with the sentiment of the human heart.

Mildred had taken a canvas (the last, perhaps, of a dozen efforts) to the studio of the great Rennier, for his criticism.

While they were standing before the easel on which the picture of the drooping branches had been placed, Corot entered; and, unobserved by either, he came up behind them in close proximity to her shoulder, and looked over it.

"Marvellous!" exclaimed Corot; "it weeps!"

Mildred's mind flew in a thousand different directions at the sound of this voice, seeking for the place and time where and when she had first heard it; but the instant she turned, and her eye lighted on that shock of white hair, though five years whiter than when she saw it in her trance, she recognized the voice that had bid her destroy Fräulein's portrait. Such experiences were now of too frequent occurrence in her life, to disturb her visibly, and she maintained apparent composure, except that a deep tinge mantled her cheek.

"Are you the artist?" Corot asked, looking into her face. "Of course you

are; for my friend Rennier, great as he is, can hardly see that atmosphere. He could paint it of course, if once seen. It takes strange eyes to see through atmosphere to what is beyond." He paused a moment, gazing at the canvas with tenderness, and added, "Trees are very human things. They are full of moods,—joy and gladness. Sometimes as in this instance, the mood is pity and pathos. Yes, yes; he that hath eyes to see will see. Your tree will find few rivals," he said, again looking her full in the face. "I advise you to let that canvas go to the next Salon."

"Is that your candid opinion, Monsieur Corot?" she tremblingly asked. She knew that a word of commendation from Corot counted as a mint of gold in the estimation of every artist in Paris.

"It is, my young friend. That willow weeps; it is delicious to gaze upon. But it has cost you the flesh on your

bones — I was going to say your soul. But, no! you have gained a soul. I have always said a woman would become creative in art when she loved divinely. Your tree betrays that love."

How Mildred did long to seize his hand, bow down and kiss the hem of his blouse, and make him her confessor! And this would have been her confession: "You were wise to direct me to leave the human face and substitute for it something in nature. I should have died in the attempt to paint another portrait. I am not old enough or strong enough physically; but in another incarnation, great master, I shall return to the mystery of the human face."

Soon after this occurrence, some conversation took place between Mildred and her father as to the advisability of seeking Corot's acquaintance, inviting him to dinner, and thus giving her an opportunity to relate the wonderful visi-

tation of his sub-conscious self. But Mr. Heath was finally of the opinion that it would prove to be an incident of minor import to the great artist, who was in the habit of living, most of the time, in an ideal world. "His spirit," he said, "will quicken not only the living, but the unborn, for generations to come; and he will pass in and out of studios whispering words of encouragement to the artist, wherever divine beauty seeks to reveal itself."

CHAPTER XIII.

SOLITUDE, SWEET SOLITUDE.

WITHIN twenty-four hours, Mildred Heath's name was circulating through the art circles of Paris. The opening of the Salon and "the Willow that Weeps" was the topic of absorbing interest. Rennier had said something about the points of gold in the artist's hair, and of her graceful form that was the counterpart of the willow; and this increased the celebrity of the picture.

Mildred herself never saw her picture in the Salon, and no one ever saw her within its portals. She left the city immediately, accompanied by her Aunt. They travelled in the South of France, and finally settled down in an old town whose cathedral bell rings the sweetest *Ave Marias* in all that country. She hired some rooms in an ancient château, the stone pavement of whose court bore the imprint of generations of feet. The

porter, with a huge key at his belt, let them in through a high stone gate. With a maid for Aunty, and a servant to prepare their meals and make their beds (whom Mildred paid extra not to admit any strangers), she was free to sleep and dream for three days or more. Her note-book was now her frequent companion, and its pages again inform us where her thoughts went.

"Solitude, sweet Solitude! To be alone with the spirit, with my spirit-husband; to commune with him; to tell him of my triumph; to tell him of this old town, and of these bells that chime! Oh, the waves of love that return from him over mountains and far-distant seas! I will hasten to my pillow at night, that I may be with his spirit. I will sleep long hours, to hold his spirit near me."

Then she writes of being alone in the pathless woods,— alone with him; of standing on the mountain overlooking a

vast stretch of country; of walking in the starry night alone with his spirit.

"I can hear his step on the wind; I can feel his breath on my cheek,— no intrusion of the world, but pure bliss of the soul. Thus I shall walk with my Arnor down to my death, and through the eternities beyond."

This strangely wedded pair never met in the body after the parting in the old German town, until the youth of the body had long passed, and the gold in her hair and the brown in his had been touched with the frost of many winters.

"The Willow that Weeps" brought offers of a large sum of money at its first exhibition; but Mildred's father did not wish to sell it. Later it was sent home as a gift to a certain public gallery, where it now hangs, its atmosphere growing richer, tenderer, and more poetic in the advancing years.

Mildred Heath painted many more

pictures, some of other trees found in unfrequented spots. The high-water mark of her genius did not ebb so long as she held the brush. Her pictures were given away to adorn homes, hospitals, and school-rooms. No one of her pictures was ever sold, and each was given away with the condition that no money should ever be obtained from its sale.

"From God came the gift," she said; "and marvellous were his ways to bestow it on me. In his service I will use it."

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE SOUL'S REST."

ARNOR THAYER followed the finger of God through great thoughts and great works. He dropped the profession of law, which had he pursued in conformity with the usual ways of that profession, having an eye single to self-aggrandizement, would have brought him fame and wealth. He professed rather laboriously to discover a way to free his fellow-men from their bondage to human greed and ambition. Whether he wrote for publication (his books on "Natural Law" are considered invaluable among men of erudition) or whether he addressed audiences, his words emanated from the great source of spiritual life,—the same source whence came the messages which were borne on the wings of air to his spiritually-wedded wife. His was an undivided soul, that served only one master.

A little apart from a city which is the home of American culture, in what may be called the outlying districts of that city, are two houses separated only by a trellised walk. They are stately mansions; one is colonial in architecture, and the other of a style equally refined. As if to retreat still further from the curiosity of the world, the porches are curtained with honeysuckle vines, roses, and other plants that climb, blossom, or yield fragrance. Both houses are filled with valuable works of art, choice books, manuscripts, and rare articles which have been gathered from many corner of the earth. On certain days in every month the public are invited to visit special rooms in these houses, being received by the porter, who acts as their guide.

Servants attend Arnor Thayer in one house and Mildred Heath in the other. The same servants go and come, and perform the duties of both establish-

ments. They are as soft of footfall, as gracious and dignified of manner, as those they serve, being restrained and educated for the most part by the spiritual atmosphere around them.

The couple inhabiting these homes are known as "the spiritually married couple." The father of the woman called them his "heavenly children," and when he passed from the earth left his fortune to be shared equally by them.

If the day is warm, the gentle lady, clad in soft white fabrics, sits in her easy chair under a favorite honeysuckle which climbs a pillar of the veranda. The pillar is of rare architectural beauty, but it is the vine she prizes. It was transplanted from the doorstep of her city home, and is carefully tended by her own hands. The man of ripened years but of noble presence, his strong features softened by the touches of time, may be seen moving across the grounds,

accompanied by his servant, to where the white figure sits, half hidden behind the fragrant blossoms. He accosts her as if she were the queen of heaven; and the smile she beams upon him dispels, to his vision at least, every trace of age in her face; her hair is again golden brown, and her eyes the winning light which has been caught from the drifting sky. She extends a hand to him, and there is always another chair beneath the honeysuckle, to which she conducts him.

The words exchanged by this couple are few, and they sit for hours together in the silence, breathing the rarest atmosphere and watching the doors open wider which lead beyond the bounds of time and place.

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